GENERAL FINDINGS

Ground Water Protection Is Complex and Difficult

Ground water is affected by virtually every activity of society. Numerous activities including industrial production, agriculture, mining, transportation, and commercial and residential activities can contaminate ground water, making development and implementation of effective ground water protection programs difficult. Furthermore, the existence of large and stable governmental programs to protect other environmental media complicates efforts to make ground water protection a priority and to develop an integrated environmental management strategy. Finally, the characteristics and dynamics of ground water systems are more difficult to measure and understand than the more visible and accessible surface and atmospheric resources.

Cleanup of contaminated soils and ground water is difficult and expensive and generally requires many years. Although cleanup activities might be viewed as remedial rather than protective, they can play a significant protective role in preventing contaminants from spreading to clean ground water in the future. The costs, time, and difficulty of major cleanup operations also serve to help emphasize the need for true prevention programs over remediation. The committee recognizes the importance of remedial activities as a ground water protective measure as well as a mitigative one.